

Quarterly Newsletter

# Naturole

Vol. 4, Issue 1

January-March, 2024

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*Aaranyak*

Nourishing Nature to Secure Our Future



# Field gear to boost conservation efforts

Aaranyak in association with the International Rhino Foundation (IRF) gifted 200 sweaters, 200 woollen caps and four life jackets to Nagaon Wildlife Division of Assam for the frontline Forest staff deployed in Laokhowa-Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuary on January 3. The field gear were handed over to the Divisional Forest Officer of Nagaon Wildlife Division, Jayanta Deka by the Secretary General and CEO of Aaranyak and Senior Advisor of IRF for Asian rhinos Dr Bibhab Talukdar in a function held in the wildlife sanctuary.

In a similar initiative, Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve Authority in association with Aaranyak organised an interaction and field gear distribution with members of Village Defence Parties (VDPs) located in the proximity to Burapahar range of the national park on January 12 to woo them for real-time support for protection of wildlife. Thirty-six members from 18 VDPs in the area participated in the interaction that was supported by David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation (DSWF). The VDP members were provided with 40 torch lights to help them gear up night vigil in the area to prevent wildlife crime.

In our sustained efforts to work in close coordination with state forest departments ten rechargeable spotlights, a three-man tent, Aaranyak annual report and 2024 calendar were provided to the Office of the Director of Balpakram National Park, Baghmara Division in Meghalaya on January 22 by a team of Aaranyak.

Aaranyak team working on mitigation of human-elephant conflict (HEC) organised a field gear distribution cum awareness programme at Rajapara village under Dohikata Revenue Circle of Goalpara district of Assam with support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The village has around 170 households.

In Rajapara-Dohikata area more than five people have died in HEC while almost all the households lost crops and property. During the paddy season elephants stay continuously in the area. In last December two elephant herds comprising around 70 individuals were present there. The awareness programme was hosted by Manjit Nath, a local youth in his own residence.

Twenty-one villagers including women from different end of Rajapara participated in the awareness programme. They interacted and shared their issues/experiences regarding HEC in their area. The participants were also sensitised on the process of expeditious procuring of compensation from the Government as per the existing norms against loss of life and property due to the HEC. Ten torch lights were distributed as HEC mitigation tools for the community of Rajapara at the end of the meeting.



# Mitigating HEC through solar fence and training



Solar powered fences are effective human elephant conflict (HEC) mitigation tool that facilitates coexistence.

A 3-km long single-strand community-managed solar fence was installed by Aaranyak and the local communities with support from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and in collaboration with Forest Department at Pukhuripara village of Goalpara district, which was formally inaugurated on January 4. The fence will protect about 70 families and around 200 bighas of cropland. During the event, an MoU was signed by the fence committee, villagers, Forest department and Aaranyak stating how the fence committee members and local people proactively should manage and maintain the fence.

Aaranyak conducted a training programme for capacity building of villagers from Batapara in Goalpara district in Assam on installation and maintenance of solar-powered electric fence at the Batapara community hall.

We plan to support the Batapara village, with a population of 42 households with 1.5 km of community managed solar fence. This village located at the border area of Assam and Meghalaya, is inhabited by indigenous Rabha community who are mostly farmers. This village is frequented by a herd of wild elephants, which forage on their crops. The training was attended by the village head, frontline forest staff from Lakhipur Forest Range, members of Elephant Conservation Network in Lakhipur and college students. The participating villagers shared information on elephant movement patterns during the training programme.

The community-managed solar fence that was installed at Batapara village of Goalpara district was inaugurated by the DFO, Goalpara Tejas Mariswami and handed over to the local community and village solar fence committee. The solar fence has been installed by Aaranyak with support of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-Assam Meghalaya Landscape Project, along with Goalpara Forest Division and in collaboration with the local community.

Around 11 km-long solar-powered fence has been installed covering 17 villages on the fringe of Raimona National Park in Kokrajhar district of Assam to mitigate the burgeoning HEC and facilitate coexistence between communities and elephants and safeguarding 870 households. The solar fence has been installed with support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and in collaboration with the local community and Forest Department of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), Assam.



## VDP members sensitised by Aaranyak secure stray rhino near Gohpur

In a welcome development VDP team of Maj Pisola (Ouguri), Gohpur in Sonitpur district of Assam were involved on January 6 in reporting and deterring potential conflict, when a rhino had strayed into their village.



The secretary of the VDP team acted very prompt after sighting the stray rhino and informed the Forest Department, police and civil administration, due to which any untoward incident was avoided. The rhino was successfully chased back to Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve.



## Connecting Kids with Rhino Conservation



Aaranyak and Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve (KNP&TR) organised an outreach programme on Greater one-horned rhinos "Friends of Rhino : Connecting Kids with Rhino Conservation" at Agaratoli Range of the national park and tiger reserve with support from Zoo Berlin. The programme included Interaction, Poster Presentation and Park Safari. Thirty-one students along with the teachers from Japoripothar, Dhuba Ati and Bonkual participated in the programme.





# Sensitisation programmes on combating wildlife crime



At least 40 personnel from Sashatra Seema Bal (SSB) were sensitised on tackling the burgeoning menace of 'wildlife crimes and illegal wildlife trade' in a workshop organised at Daranga Border Outpost (BOP) of 64th Battalion of the border guarding force located close to India-Bhutan border.

A resource team of Aaranyak sensitised the students of Jawaharlal Nehru College, Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh on the importance of wildlife and ecosystem as a whole in context of D'Ering Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary located in their proximity as well as general perspective of conservation during an awareness programme held. The awareness programme was organised by the DFO office, D'Ering Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary in association with the NSS unit of Jawaharlal Nehru College at the college premises on the theme 'Wildlife Matters, Save Wildlife'.

About 60 personnel of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) deployed in the international airport in Guwahati were sensitised on the grave threat posed to the nation by the ever increasing illegal wildlife trade taking place through various airports in the country in two back-to-back workshops conducted by a resource team from Aaranyak. The workshops were conducted support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Another workshop on 'combating wildlife crime through awareness' was organised by Aaranyak in collaboration with the Orang National Park & Tiger Reserve Authority, Sonitpur Police, Village Defence Organisation (Government of Assam) and District Administration of Sonitpur with support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in Borbhagia Belsiri Gaon Panchayat community hall at Dhekiajuli in Sonitpur District of Assam.

During one of the events, an Aaranyak resource team highlighted ways the media could assist in preventing wildlife crime and can help to conserve biodiversity that is vital for survival of various species by making a detailed presentation on the scenario of wildlife crime and the expected role of the media in mitigating it before a group of prominent journalists from across the country. The journalists who have gathered for the National Executive Committee Meeting of Indian Journalists Union (IJU) at Burha Mayong in Morigaon district of Assam from March 2-3 under the aegis of Journalists Union of Assam (JUA), were urged by Aaranyak experts.

With the objective to sensitise and provide some basic inputs for detection of Illegal Wildlife Products that are being routed through airlines in passenger luggage and cargos, Aaranyak joined hands with the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, Government of India and organised a sensitisation session on Illegal Wildlife Trade in collaboration with Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Guwahati on March 18. The workshop was conducted for staff of various airlines involved in security related operations like scanning of luggage and cargos at Guwahati airport. The sensitisation workshop aimed to help airlines' staff develop skills to identify, detect, review and report wildlife products that are being smuggled through the air route. The workshop was held with support from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.



One of Aaranyak experts took a session on the key role that could be played by country's border guarding forces like the SSB in curbing burgeoning wildlife crimes as an invited resource person at the SSB 27 Battalion base at Howly in Assam. The precise topic of her discussion was "Role of Border Agencies in Curbing Wildlife Crime in Areas of Operation". A large number of SSB personnel attended the sensitisation session on wildlife crimes.

In Namsai district, eastern Arunachal Pradesh, over 70 village heads, panchayat presidents and members of zila parishads were trained to be aware of poaching and illegal wildlife trading in their area. The awareness meeting conducted by resource persons from Aaranyak under the aegis of the Extra Assistant Commissioner (EAC) of Lekang Revenue Circle at Mahadevpur of Namsai district on March 15 with support from US Fish and Wildlife Service.



# BSF personnel in Meghalaya sensitised on Asian elephants, coexistence



A team of Aaranyak has extended support to Meghalaya Forest Department in conducting outreach events to generate awareness on Asian Elephants for personnel of country's elite border guarding force, the Border Security Force - BSF deployed along the India-Bangladesh border in Garo Hills region of Meghalaya.

The BSF personnel guarding the country's frontier with Bangladesh in that region often encounter the gentle giants which are sometimes in conflict with human beings living in the region. The Border Security Forces, invited the Meghalaya Forest Department for such an outreach event to generate awareness on Asian elephant behaviour and potential measures for coexistence.

The resource team from Aaranyak extended the support to the department and conducted the sensitisation event for the 1st Battalion of the BSF based at Mahadeo in South Garo Hills of Meghalaya.

Another outreach event to generate awareness on Asian Elephants for personnels of 100th Battalion of the Border Security Force deployed along the India- Bangladesh border in West Garo Hills of Meghalaya was organised. Aaranyak with support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been working in Assam and Meghalaya on conservation of elephants using a multi stakeholder and multipronged approach.



## Village level outreach on human elephant coexistence



A series of outreach programme, aimed at mitigating negative interactions between humans and elephants while promoting coexistence was conducted in six villages in the districts of Baksa (Jalabasti and Hedayatpur), Tamulpur (Sonmoni, Gerua, and Paharpur) and Udalguri (Sidaguri), frequently visited by wild elephants from 14-28 February.

Through this outreach series, we reached out to around 210 villagers, including youths, and women, and people who are actively engaged in managing HEC at village level. The workshops were supported by SBI Foundation and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



A Golden Langur is perched on a dark tree branch, surrounded by lush green foliage. The monkey has a distinctive black face and a thick, golden-brown coat of fur. It is holding a small object in its mouth with its right hand. The background is a dense forest with sunlight filtering through the leaves, creating a bokeh effect.

**A Golden  
Langur  
in it's  
Natural  
Habitat**





# Participation in elephant census in Assam



We have worked with the Assam Forest Department on their extensive Elephant Estimation 2024 programme throughout wild landscapes in Assam. Aaranyak's senior conservationist Dr Dipankar Lahkar provided necessary training and guidance to the staff of Chirang Forest Division and associated team for the census.

Aaranyak's senior official Arif Hussain participated in Elephant Estimation 2024 in Kaziranga as an individual observer of Bagori and Burapahar Range of Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve. While several other Aaranyak officials also attended the census. In Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, our GIS Analyst Avishek Sarkar provided proactive assistance to the census team in the field.

Young wildlife biologists Imon Abedin and Jyotibrata Mahanta were involved in the census in the Dhansiri Lungding Elephant Reserve in Nagaon South Division of Hojai, assisting the forest staff deployed in the field in conducting the vital census process. While General Members from Aaranyak also joined hands in the Elephant Population Estimation of Chirang Forest Division.

The six-member team comprising of Chiranjeeb Sarma, Lakhinandan Dutta, Shyamata Ram Phookan, Pranjit Rajbongshi, Rahmatulla Ahmed and Ankur Sarma assisted the division in the field with the census.

Another team of Aaranyak comprised of Rounak Dean, Bijeet Boro, Mukesh Kherkatarry and Mizing Boro assisted the Raimona National Park Authority during the census process in the field.

While biologist Anushka Saikia and Field Staff Rupam Goyari, assisted the forest staff of Batabari range in the area of Bhutankhuti and Mainaguri of Dihira Reserve Forest in the Baksa district of Assam, during the census of elephants.

Our team stationed in Eastern Assam took part in the count with full enthusiasm where the team comprising of Rubul Tanti, Ejaj Ahmed, Pranjit Borah, and Tibrajyoti Gogoi participated at the census held in Dehing Patkai Landscape and sighted encouraging number of gentle giants.





## GPS training to Assam Forest staff for elephant census

Senior official with Aaranyak Arup Kumar Das has imparted GPS training to forest officials of the Goalpara Forest Division of Assam Forest Department at the Goalpara DFO office premises. The Aaranyak expert presented Block Maps of Elephant Estimation to each of the staff members of the forest division as well as to the Elephant Estimation experts from Assam Forest Department, Guwahati at the premises of Goalpara Press Club.

In another training, Das and another Aaranyak official Madhumita Borthakur imparted GPS training to forest officials of the Kamrup West Division of the Assam Forest Department. Apart from the said training the Aaranyak experts also prepared Block Maps which will be helpful for the same purpose.

As per an official request from DFO of Tinsukia Wildlife Division K. N. Das, AFS to Aaranyak, senior official and GIS expert Arup Kumar Das as a technical expert led a training to assist the forest division in preparation of Block Maps and hands-on GPS training for the ongoing Elephant Estimation 2024. The block maps of the elephant estimation 2024 for Dibru-saikhowa National Park has been prepared for the park authority to be useful during estimation.



## Elephant Conservation Network formed

In order to facilitate coexistence between communities and Wild Elephants through community participation in conflict affected areas of Assam, Aaranyak has formed an Elephant Conservation Network (ECN) at Bhootechang Tea Estate in Udalguri district of Assam. The exercise of ECN formation took place at the office of All Adivasi Students' Association of Assam (AASAA) in the tea estate.

A group of 23 community members from different villages of Bhootechang area participated in the ECN formation meeting and formed a team to work for mitigation of human-elephant conflict (HEC) so as to facilitate coexistence. Aaranyak resource team conducted a day-long training for the newly-formed ECN on conservation of elephant, HEC mitigation measures and assessment of crop and property damages as well as the application process for claiming compensation against damages caused to property, crops and human life during interface with wild elephants.

With this new group, 12 ECNs which act as 'early warning units', have been formed by Aaranyak in Udalguri, Baksa and Goalpara districts of Assam for mitigation of HEC with support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and SBI Foundation. Another training was conducted at Badlapara Anganbadi centre in Udalguri district for Badlapara ECN groups for strengthening the team. Twenty-one ECN group members participated in the training programme.



# Human elephant coexistence workshops on eastern Assam



Aaranyak has adopted a people-centric approach for mitigation of human-elephant conflicts in parts of Assam and Meghalaya, a large group of volunteers selected from HEC-affected villagers, has been providing outstanding services for facilitation of coexistence between communities and wild elephants. These volunteers are members of several Rapid Response Units (RRUs) formed by Aaranyak in HEC-affected areas and entrusted mainly to manage the HEC-alert network to warn villagers in time about presence of wild elephants so as to facilitate their safe passage.

During this quarter, we organised a series of three workshops for RRU members in eastern Assam districts of Majuli, Dibrugarh and Jorhat. The RRU training workshops began with highlighting Aaranyak's efforts in conservation of biodiversity and ensuring people's well-being and the objectives of creating RRUs. This introductory sessions were followed by presentations of Aaranyak resource persons on morphological characteristics to identify elephants in a herd, their distribution and the drivers of HEC. Our team also explained various roles and responsibilities that are expected to be shouldered by RRUs in minimising HEC.

Altogether 133 villagers, members of RRU and Anti-Depredation Squads (a group formed by the Forest Department to address HEC) and forest officials were trained during these workshops. During the series of training workshops, we provided 10 rechargeable torch lights to ADS from Namsang Tea Estate where the wild elephants frequently visit the village and also to RRU in Majuli.

To equip local communities with diverse HEC mitigation tools and techniques, we have organised a comprehensive training session for Village Champions and Educators in Hatimora Gaon, Dibrugarh, on January 11. The training aimed to provide a basic understanding of HEC, its root causes, and potential mitigation measures and practices. A total of seven Village Champions from five project districts in eastern Assam took part in the training, and shared their insights and experience of HEC, and its mitigation using traditional techniques.

Three outreach campaigns were conducted at Notun Haladhibari in Majuli, and Hatishal Mising Gaon, and Chutal bagh Hatishal in Jorhat district to raise awareness on how to coexist with the elephants. These villages are human-elephant conflict affected areas where Aaranyak in partnership with British Asian Trust is working to mitigate HEC. Through these outreach programmes we reached out to 65 villagers, using well-illustrated IEC materials that depicted the tried and tested mitigation measures.



During the programmes we interacted with the villagers to share knowledge on Elephant Behaviours, causes of conflict, and how we can work cohesively in promoting coexistence. To understand the knowledge gained, we conducted a pre and post evaluation using a questionnaire as well. We reached out to around 163 villagers from Nahor Jan and Tanti Pather Koibotto gaon of Dibrugarh district, Baliyan Nogaon (Padumphula), of Tinsukia district, Namoni Gazera, of Majuli and Kachariveti (Charaguwa Grant) of Sivasagar district through another outreach series. A well-illustrated IEC material was used to generate awareness on potential mitigation measures, reading elephant behaviour and an interaction with the villagers for knowledge sharing.



We conducted an outreach event at No.2 Basa Gaon, Sadiya of Tinsukia on human elephant conflict (HEC) mitigation practices to aware the villagers on different mitigation measures to aid human elephant coexistence. Twenty-one villagers gathered during the programme, and learned about the tried and tested measures to minimise HEC and promote coexistence.

In Charaguwa Grant village of Sivasagar district, a village of historical importance on the periphery of the Panidhing Wildlife Sanctuary, we trained school students to perform a skit, and narrate a story on peaceful coexistence through conservation drama. Around 20 students from the Charaguwa high school enthusiastically participated and performed the play for the villagers, and officials from Aaranyak and British Asian Trust to deliver the message on how, with little perseverance, we can coexist with the elephants. Aaranyak's Tibrajyoti Gogoi scripted the drama with inputs from the team based in eastern Assam.

## Farmer Producer Company activities evaluated



The Project Monitoring Committee gathered on January 9, at Jharbari, Kokrajhar, to assess and oversee the activities of the Farmer Producer Company (FPC) Swmkhwr Bilai. The FPC is a vital initiative supported under NABARD assistance, aiming to enhance the region's agricultural and economic landscape.

The committee included key members such as the Lead District Manager, the District Development Manager from NABARD, the District Veterinary Officer from Kokrajhar, and a representative from Aaranyak acting as the Producer Organization Promoting Institution (POPI) representative.

## Safety signboards installed on road for elephants and commuters



Aaranyak's continued commitment in mitigation of Human elephant conflict continues with installation of 12 signboards at strategic locations in Udalguri, Tamulpur and Baksa districts of Assam for ensuring safety passage of wildlife as well as people across busy roads. The signboards highlight about elephant's presence in the area, and how we all must be careful to avoid unwanted encounters with elephants, and improve safety for both people and elephants.

This also serves as a means of awareness, and how to share space. For wider reach, we have currently installed signages in English, Assamese and Hindi languages. The boards currently stands along the roadside of Paneri Tea Garden, Bhootechang Tea Garden, Orangajuli, Nagrijuli, Kumarikata, Khairani, Uttarkuchi and Subankhata.

These strategic locations were selected with prior consultation with the local people, forest personnel and tea garden authorities, followed by a survey to understand the feasibility of installation. We are grateful to SBI Foundation and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the support extended.

## Outreach workshops on bird conservation

An outreach workshop on the conservation of vultures was organised by the Eastern Assam Zone of Aaranyak on 13 January at Hafaluting High School in Sivasagar. The awareness event was attended by over 100 students and faculty of the school, who had the opportunity to interact on the crucial topic. A decision was made to install awareness posters in areas where vultures often encounter death due to various reasons.

Keeping parity with the Bird census of Kaziranga 2024, the Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve Authority, Aaranyak and Wildlife Institute of India (WII) conducted various bird conservation awareness programmes in various schools to introduce the students with basics of bird watching, identification and conservation needs. The first programme was conducted in Bhogamukh Jatiya Vidyalaya, Laokhowa with the participation of 250 students. While the second event was held in Kaliabor Higher Secondary School with participation of 300 students. The programmes included audio visual presentations and quiz on birds.





## Workshop organised to work out Hoolock gibbon conservation

In order to generate conservation tempo to secure Hoolock gibbon population in Tripura in Northeast India as well as facilitate future planning a 3-day workshop was organised on Hoolock gibbon Conservation Action Plan in Agartala, Tripura. The workshop was held during January 10-12 by Aaranyak with a mission of carrying out research, training and conservation activities in Northeast India, in collaboration with Tripura University and Tripura Forest Department and with support from Tripura Biodiversity Board, IUCN small section & IUCN Primate Specialist Group.



Again, Aaranyak organised a training programme on Hoolock gibbon conservation strategy at the Gibbon Conservation Centre of the Hoollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam's Jorhat district. This training got underway on March 28, in collaboration with Jorhat Forest Division of Assam Forest Department and with support from The Habitat Trusts, IUCN SSC Primate Specialists Group, and IUCN Primate Section of Small Apes in order to conduct research, training, and conservation activities on Hoolock gibbons in Assam. Twenty-nine frontline forest staff undertook the training, which would conclude on April 2.

## Training conducted on water hyacinth crafts for women



A second-phase training workshop on Water Hyacinth Crafts was organised for women in Dhania village on the fringe of Laokhowa-Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuary in Nagaon district of Assam as part of the efforts to provide an alternative livelihood opportunity for the participants.

The workshop was organised by Aaranyak in collaboration with Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve Authority, Burhachapori and Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary Authority, Nagaon Wildlife Division and Laokhowa Burhachapori Wildlife Conservation Society (LBCS) with support from the International Rhino Foundation (IRF).

## Republic Day celebrated

Team Aaranyak celebrated the 75th Republic Day at our administrative office in Guwahati as well as various field offices throughout the state. We unfurled the tricolour, listened to motivational speeches from our scientists and conservation leaders while committing ourselves to continue with our efforts to conserve the rich biodiversity in Northeast India.

## First aid administration training for HEC-affected community



Human Elephant Conflict (HEC) impacts the well-being of the local communities who share the habitat with these pachyderms.

In response to this, Aaranyak and SBI Foundation is working using multi-dimensional approach and multi-stakeholder engagement in high HEC areas. A first aid training was conducted at Sidaguri village in Udalguri district to build capacity of the local villagers. The training was held in collaboration with DDMA with the aim to equip people with essential skills and knowledge, serving as a crucial tool for aid during encounters with elephants and as well to facilitate any pre hospital treatment emergencies within the villages. The training was followed by an interaction session with the villagers on effectively mitigating HEC using our well-illustrated IEC material.

## Training on cooking, catering and hospitality for forest fringe villagers

A cooking, catering, and hospitality training was provided to villagers of Borunguri-Bongaon villags on the fringe of Laokhowa-Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuary in order to enhance their skills for exploring alternative livelihood opportunities.

Notably they are starting an ethnic food outlet, Bwisang Na. The training was organised by Aaranyak on January 21 in collaboration with the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve authority, Laokhowa-Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuary authority, Nagaon Wildlife Division, Nowgong Girls' College and Laokhowa-Burhachapori Conservation Society (LBCS) with support from the International Rhino Foundation.

## Aaranyak participates in Meghalaya Waterbird Census

Aaranyak's conservation biologist, Dr Dipankar Lahkar, participated as an enumerator in the Asian Waterbird Census conducted by the Meghalaya Forest Department in collaboration with the Khasi Hills Wildlife Division, Shillong, and the Meghalaya Biodiversity Board on Wetlands Day in Meghalaya. Aaranyak's officials Pranjal Deka and Biswajit Basumatary also attended the census.



## 5th Kaziranga Bird Conservation Festival



We participated in the 5th Kaziranga Bird Conservation Festival (Water Bird Count), organised by the Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve. Our team comprising of Udayan Borthakur, Dr Dipankar Lahkar, Arif Hussain, Bhaskor Barukial, Chinmoy Swargiary, and Jigyas Baruah took active role as enumerators and was assisted by Birdutta Baro. Apart from participating in the bird count, Aaranyak also displayed some of its major initiatives and programmes on conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity in the North Eastern Region of India through an exhibition stall. Our team interacted with a number of nature enthusiasts, students, teachers, and local residents.

## Foot print at Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival

A team from Aaranyak attended the 9th edition and 5th mega celebration of Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival held near Pakke Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh from January 18-20. The focus of the festival was to boost conservation outreach of all species of hornbills found in Pakke Tiger Reserve and its fringes, promote tradition and culture of local indigenous communities as well as conservation of other wildlife and habitats. Aaranyak being an invitee to this grand event showcased its diverse conservation efforts in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and the rest of Northeast India.



## Interactive programme on roles and responsibilities of EDCs

The Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve Authority in collaboration with Aaranyak and Wildlife Institute of India (WII) organised an interaction programme on roles and responsibilities of EDCs, scope of EDCs, ecotourism and future plan among the EDC members of Burapahar and Bagori Range.

## Aaranyak conservation leaders hold discussion with US Consul General



Aaranyak's officials as well as Executive Committee members Dr. Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, Dr. Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar, Jimut Prasad Sarma, Udayan Borthakur and Dr. Alolika Sinha met the US Consul General, Kolkata- Ms. Melinda Pavek, along with Consul, Quazi Rumman Dastgir, Political and Economic Affairs and Sangita Dey Chanda, Economic Specialist for US Consulate, Kolkata for a meeting to discuss about Aaranyak's efforts on biodiversity conservation and safeguarding human well-being on January 11.

We also acknowledged all the cooperation and support provided to Aaranyak by the US agencies, and discussed about potential future collaborations.

## Aaranyak's expert talk on conservation in Daying Ering Memorial WLS

Daying Ering Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary authority in collaboration with its Eco Development Committee and Mijing Sirum group of Borguli village conducted an awareness programme on Wildlife Protection and Conservation at Borguli village, Mebo Sub-Division, Arunachal Pradesh on January 18. Aaranyak's Rubul Tanti delivered a talk on the subject and how various stakeholders plays important role in conserving wildlife. He also emphasised on human elephant conflict and its mitigation measures to facilitate coexistence. People from different villages, Forest Department staffs, Police Department staffs participated in the programme.



## Motorcycles gifted to Goalpara Forest Division

We have handed over two motorcycles to Goalpara Forest Division of Assam to assist the department to enhance mobility of its staff during the human-elephant conflict (HEC) mitigation efforts. The motorcycles were handed over by Aaranyak's conservation scientist Dr Bibhuti Lahkar and official Anjan Baruah.





## Continuing with 'Prakriti Parichay'



A resource team of Aaranyak carried out Prakriti Parichay focusing on biodiversity, conservation and Protected Areas of Assam in New Guwahati Adarsha High School, Bamunimaidan in Guwahati. The programme conducted by Aaranyak resource persons, involved nearly 200 students.

The students were given an overview of biodiversity – its role and importance followed by the concept of conservation and its different types as well as information on National Park and Wildlife Sanctuaries of Assam. The students participated actively in the biodiversity and conservation quizzical and riddles. Aaranyak through its uniquely curated environment educational programme “Prakriti Parichay” is inculcating environment stewardship among students and youths to prevent loss of biodiversity caused by habitat destruction, pollution, climate change, overexploitation of natural resources to name a few.

A group activity was also carried out on “biodiversity, conservation and life” involving 14 students grouped into two with seven students in each group. As part of the activity, the group members discussed among themselves the subject matter and took different aspects of the subject and highlighted those aspects to the other students present in the programme.

During another event students of Sanskriti the Gurukul were provided with a comprehensive understanding of the water cycle, emphasising the significance of rainfall in replenishing groundwater reservoirs which serves as a vital source of drinking water, agricultural irrigation and ecosystem support.

Jayanta Kumar Pathak, Senior Manager with Aaranyak emphasised on the importance of responsible water consumption to reduce the strain on groundwater resources, appealing to the students to adopt water-saving habits both at school and at home. Tanvi Hussain made a demonstration before the students on the importance of perforated paved surfaces in context of urban areas like Guwahati for groundwater recharging through rainfall contribution to maintain balance in aquifers and preventing water resource depletion. These students undertook students’ project activities under the guidance of Aaranyak officials Pranab Goswami and Wasima Begum. During the programme the students presented and explained their project to the mentors and received certificates of project completion from the organisation as well as an engaging illustrated comic book on conservation of Greater one-horned Rhinoceros composed by Kaveeta Duarah.



# Training on 'Crop management and prevention of pest infestation'

The flagship programme marked another chapter at Kidzee Bonda Centre in collaboration with Help\_aid Foundation. The programme was curated with an aim to inculcate environmental stewardship in students by fostering a sense of responsibility, sustainability, ecological awareness through joyful learning. During the programme the cognitive ability of the students were assessed through various ice breaking biodiversity games related to birds, butterflies and insects and later engaging them to draw what they perceived.

The programme was also organised at Kidzee Bonda Centre in collaboration with Help Aid Foundation. The programme was curated with an aim to inculcate environmental stewardship in students by fostering a sense of responsibility, sustainability, ecological awareness through joyful learning. During the programme the cognitive ability of the students were assessed through various ice breaking biodiversity games related to birds, butterflies and insects and later engaging them to draw what they perceived. This form of assessment encourages critical thinking and allows students to demonstrate their knowledge in creative ways. Aaranyak's Wasima Begum emphasised the students about nature's broad spectrum, how we connect to nature, how nature heals us, and how nature is useful. Anjulina Choudhary of Help Aid Foundation also communicated with the students about nature and environment



With an aim of supplementing the livelihoods of human-elephant conflict (HEC) affected people of Eastern Assam, Aaranyak in partnership with the British Asian Trust with Darwin Initiative support, conducted a training at No.2 Basa Gaon, Sadiya in Assam on 'Crop Management and prevention of Pest Infestation'.

An expert from KVK Tinsukia, Dr Sarodee Boruah conducted the training and shared knowledge on managing, improving and protecting crops from various diseases and pests that damage agricultural crops. Moreover, the trainees were also educated on how to succeed in getting maximum yield from the farm through proper and sustainable practices.

A total of 26 trainees attended the training from four nearby villages, wherein, they had also received support from us to cultivate various crops and other necessary materials.



# Executive Director of IRF interacts with Team Aaranyak

The Executive Director of the International Rhino Foundation (IRF), Nina Fascione visited our administrative office in Guwahati and interacted with our team on January 29.

The IRF senior official stated that the IRF would be looking forward for much longer association with Aaranyak for the conservation of Greater One-Horned Rhino whose global population now stood at around 4,014. The IRF, a global donor agency that has been supporting conservation of different species of rhino in several countries in Africa and Asia, has been working with Aaranyak for about 12 years now on rhino conservation issues.



## Aaranyak in consultation on updating of National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan

A team from Aaranyak took part at the recently completed 2nd Regional Consultation on the updating of National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan organised by National Biodiversity Authority in association with United Nations Development Programme - UNDP and BCIL, India under the guidance of Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Government of India held at IORA, The Retreat, Kaziranga. Whereas, another team showcased different impactful research based initiatives, approaches and success stories of the organisation, rigorously working for protection and sustainability of the biodiversity the NE Region of India. Our team also showcased Aaranyak's flagship works dedicated for the empowerment of fringe community while supporting with alternative livelihood modes. PIRBI, a community owned enterprise supported by Aaranyak also demonstrated various Karbi ethnic products prepared locally at Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape under the guidance of Aaranyak team.

# Celebration of World Wetlands Day



We observed the World Wetlands Day on February 2 in Tilapara Kherpuji Senior Basic School, located near the Doloni Beel of Bongaigaon District, Assam. The programme was jointly organised by Aaranyak in collaboration with the Tilapara Kherpuji Senior Basic School, Department of Botany of Abhayapuri College and Tilapara Milan Sangha, a local club. The objective of celebrating the day was to sensitise the students, teachers, and the community of the area about the importance of conserving wetlands in tune with this year's theme - Wetlands and Human Wellbeing.

An 'Awareness Procession' was taken out in the village road of Tilapara with participation of students, teachers, members of Aaranyak and local citizens. A drawing contest among students was held on the theme "Natural scenery of your locality". A Public Awareness Meeting was organised in the premises of the school where more than 200 students took part, besides a good number of women from local Shelf Help Groups from the village of Tilapara and Sankarghola, teachers of the school and local people. The winners of the drawing competition received books as prizes.

In another occasion over 80 students and 12 teachers from 8 eco-clubs from neighbouring schools participated in a programme organised by Majuli Forest Division at Kotai beel, kotai Naharani area in collaboration with Aaranyak, Aryabhata Science Centre, and Donyi Green Foundation on Wetlands Day in Majuli.



## Simalu Festival at LBWLS



The first Laokhowa-Burhachapori Simalu Festival was organised by the Assam Forest Department, Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve Authority, Nagaon Wildlife Division, Laokhowa Burhachapori Conservation Society (LBCS), Aaranyak, WWF India, and Nagaon Girls' College at Bwisang Na, Laokhowa of Nagaon district recently. The festival marked the opening of Bwisang Na, a community-run eco-resort to promote ethnic food support local community.

The programme included an interactive session among experts and participant, and a cultural event showcasing the rich culture and tradition of the area. The event was also marked by inauguration of a 30-km cycle track along the sanctuary boundary for tourists that will provide the opportunity to experience the beauty of Simalu in bloom and wetlands of the park. About 40 cyclists participated in a bicycle rally to promote conservation and awareness message.



## Pobitora WLS staff attend health care camps



Aaranyak in association with Guwahati Wildlife Division and Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary Authority organised a free eye care camp at the wildlife sanctuary. The eye care camp was organised for the wellbeing of the frontline staff as well as others. 69 frontline workers and staff members of the wildlife sanctuary availed opportunity for the comprehensive eye check-up services provided by team of ophthalmologists and health workers.

In another occasion, Aaranyak in collaboration with Guwahati Wildlife Division, Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary and SHIPA (Pobitora based local NGO), organised an exclusive health camp to provide essential health care service to the Frontline workers, staff members of Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary and local community on Friday, March 29. Over 105 people including staff of Pobitora WLS, frontline workers and locals participated in this camp. The impact of this initiative was truly felt as individuals expressed their gratitude towards the dedicated doctors and staffs who selflessly contributed their expertise to the camp. The health camp was supported by Zoo Berlin.

## Scientist from Aaranyak takes part in primatology conference

Aaranyak's senior primatologist Dr Dilip Chetry attended the plenary session as one of the co-speakers at the 2nd Conference of the Association of Indian Primatologists (AIP) at the University of Mysore along with Prof Mewa Singh, a famous primatologist from India.

In a special session of "In the memories of Surendra Mal Mohnot" the contribution of Prof Surendra Mal Mohnot in the conservation of primates in Northeast India was highlighted. Dr Chetry, who heads the primate conservation initiatives of Aaranyak mentioned that Prof Mohnot was an important figure in the development of the Gibbon Conservation Centre at Hoollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary, Assam, where Aaranyak and the Assam Forest Department organised a variety of training, education, and research programmes on Hoolock Gibbon in particular and primates in general. In another session, researcher with Aaranyak Rumana Maheen presented her presentation under the title "An integrative approach to the study of the macaque presence and distribution in Tezu, Arunachal Pradesh, India".



# Exposure visit for Nepal community leaders, PA managers



A team of Protected Area managers and community leaders from Nepal recently visited Kaziranga and Manas Landscape as part of an exposure trip to experience best practices related to protected area management (species and habitat), community-livelihood work and human-wildlife conflict mitigation in and around both protected areas.

This exposure trips to Kaziranga Landscape and Manas Landscape were supported by Zoological Society of London-Nepal in assistance from Aaranyak which facilitated the team's trips with local logistic arrangements besides enabling them to have interactions with park managers and communities in Kaziranga and Manas landscapes.



During their visit to Kaziranga landscape on February 5 and 6, the team from Nepal had an interaction with Aaranyak team followed by an interactive session with senior forest officials of Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve at the conventional center there. A village walk-cum-trekking was arranged for the visitors in the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong Landscape by a team of Aaranyak.

During their visit to Manas landscape during February 7 to 9, the team from Nepal attended an interactive session in Manas Conservation and Outreach Centre (MCOOC) of Aaranyak at Bhuyanpara, with senior forest officials who have worked in Manas Landscape, Aaranyak officials and the local NGOs. The interaction was focused on protected area management, community-livelihood work and human-wildlife conflict mitigation in and around Manas Landscape. The team embarked on jeep safaris to witness the rich biodiversity of the Manas and the contiguity of Manas National Park with Royal National Park across the border in Bhutan.

## Aaranyak-guided Guwahati school wins 'Wipro Earthian Award'



Wipro Foundation organised the 13th edition of Wipro earthian awards for the year 2023. This year Wipro Earthian received over 1000 project submissions from 28 states and 6 union territories of India. Aaranyak being the partner organisation in Assam is elated to share that among so many entries New Guwahati Adarsha High School of Assam won this prestigious "Wipro earthian Award 2023" at the National level on the theme of "Sustainability and Waste" along with 22 schools. It is indeed a proud moment for us as they are the winner for two consecutive years in a row. The awards were presented by Rishad Premji, Chairman, Wipro Limited and Anurag Behar, CEO of the Azim Premji Foundation on February 25 in Bangalore.



## Camping shelters presented to EDC group

Two camping shelters have been gifted by Aaranyak to Borunguri Bongaon EDC group to use in “Bwisang Na”, the Ethnic Food Hub in Laokhowa. These shelters have been sponsored by the International Rhino Foundation (IRF).

The Bwisang Na is a community-run ecoresort, an initiative of Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve authority, Laokhowa-Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuary authority, Nagaon Wildlife Division with support from Laokhowa Burhachapori Wildlife Conservation Society (LBCS), Aaranyak, WWF-India and Nagaon Girls College for promoting local cuisine, creation of livelihood opportunities and facilitate Financial Security of local communities living on fringes of Laokhowa-Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuary.

## Training on cultivation of Assam Lemon for biofence

Aaranyak and the British Asian Trust with the aim of capacitating local villagers affected by human elephant conflict (HEC) and supplementing their livelihoods to offset the losses incurred due to HEC, conducted a training on Lemon cultivation and prevention of crop infestation in Konwarbam, Jeypore, of Dibrugarh district. The training was conducted in collaboration with the KVK, Dibrugarh, wherein their experts Sharmistha Borgohain and Sanghamitra Sarmah, imparted training to 38 villagers from three nearby villages, focusing mainly on Assam lemon.

Lemon plants act as a good biofence, when cultivated in a particular pattern. The lemon plants should be planted in three rows, and in each row the plant should be in alternate position. This is a tried and tested tool to mitigate HEC, and help generate additional income by selling the lemons. We have partnered with the local villagers, and extended partial support to 15 beneficiaries with lemon saplings to initiate the biofence, which will be maintained and monitored by the communities.

During the training, the villagers received hands-on demonstration on the plantation process. Moreover, the trainees were also educated on the pest management, harvesting season and the market prospects in order to encourage to augment their livelihood. This training is a part of Aaranyak's and British Asian Trust's work on promoting human elephant coexistence in Assam and Meghalaya, with support from Darwin Initiative.



## Aaranyak-AAU collaborative research on HEC, Nutritional insecurity



A joint initiative by Aaranyak and the Department of Food Science and Nutrition at AAU - Assam Agricultural University is investigating the impact of Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) on the nutritional status of women and children in Jorhat district, Assam. The study aims to assess the nutritional status of women and children residing in villages with varying levels of HEC, analyze the impact of HEC on food availability and accessibility within these communities, and evaluate the influence of HEC on dietary diversity among them.

This research has the potential to:

- Inform the development of targeted interventions aimed at improving food security in HEC-affected areas.
- Contribute to the formulation of effective policies and strategies to mitigate the impact of HEC on vulnerable communities.

## Aaranyak conservationists address Bodoland International Wildlife Conference

Senior conservation biologist with Aaranyak, Dr Purnima Devi Barman spoke on “Story of Hargila : A journey of Co-existence” in the Bodoland International Wildlife Conference in Bodoland Territorial Region, Assam. Her presentation was focused on the interaction between people and Hargila (Greater Adjutant Stork), the bond between people and biodiversity, and the harmonious connection that exists between nature and us. She also inspired students to take action through environmental education and take their first steps toward saving biodiversity. Her talk was greeted with a standing ovation.

While Dr Bibhuti Lahkar, a conservation scientist from Aaranyak made a substantive presentation on 'Revival of Sub-Himalayan Grassland by Managing Invasive Alien Plants in Manas World Heritage Site'.

Senior official Jayanta Kumar Sarma also made a presentation in a technical session on topic “Additional and alternative sustainable livelihood generation around wildlife protected areas”. The discussion focused on the scope for regenerative development with the approach of conservation livelihood for people living in forest fringe areas in the context of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).



## Aaranyak scientist delivers talks at Dibrugarh University



Aaranyak's senior Environmental Scientist Dr Partha Jyoti Das delivered a talk on "Why is resilience an Important Development Concern for Assam ? A Hydroclimatic Perspective" at Dibrugarh University. While Dr Das delivered another talk on "Community Based Participatory Research" on February 20 at the university. These special lectures were organised by the Centre for Social Work Studies, Dibrugarh University for the students and faculty members. Notably Dr Das also holds the position of Professor of Practice at the Dibrugarh University.

## Alternative crops promoted to mitigate HEC in eastern Assam

Aaranyak and British Asian Trust, with support from Darwin Initiative with the aim of supplementing the livelihood of human-elephant conflict (HEC)- affected people, conducted a training on Assam Lemon (Kaji Nemu) and Bhot Jolokia (one of the hottest chillies) plantation and prevention of crop infestation in No.1 Basagaon, Sadiya on March 1, as alternative crop cultivation to reduce HEC.

The training was conducted in collaboration with KVK Tinsukia, wherein, subject matter expert Dr Sarodee Boruah imparted knowledge to 19 villagers from four nearby villages, focusing mainly on pest control management. Lemon also acts as a Bio Fence, when cultivated in a particular manner. This is a tried and tested tool to mitigate HEC which in turn, also helps in earning an additional income for the community by selling it in the market. We have partnered with local villagers and extended partial support with lemon saplings.



The training was followed by a pre-post evaluation to understand the knowledge gained by the trainees which was conducted through a questionnaire. Trainees also received hands-on demonstrations on the plantation process and a better understanding of harvesting season and market prospects to encourage them to augment their income level.

It highlighted the importance of digital innovation in conservation efforts, showcasing how technology can be harnessed to protect and preserve threatened species and their habitats. The local communities often possess unique knowledge about the local ecosystem and wildlife, which can be valuable in conservation efforts, and by engaging them conservation initiatives can be made more inclusive and effective as they are tailored to the specific needs and concerns of the community.

## World Wildlife Day celebration

The World Wildlife Day is celebrated on March 3 globally. It is an initiative to raise awareness about wildlife conservation and highlights the roles and contributions of wildlife to the planet and people.

On this occasion celebrated with the theme of “Connecting People and Planet: Exploring Digital Innovation in Wildlife Conservation”, conservation movies were screened at Chandrasing Rongpi Village playground, near Kaziranga National Park in Assam by Aaranyak. A total of 45 people from Chanrasing Rongpi and nearby Hemati Lekhte, Phumen Engti, and Bakring Engti villages attended the screening while also engaging in the discussion on the wildlife conservation with experts of Aaranyak. But beyond mere entertainment, the movies served a deeper purpose.



In commemoration of the vital day, officials from the High Commission of Australia in Delhi visited nesting colony sites of Greater Adjutant Stork (Hargila) in Kamrup district of Assam. Multiple outreach programmes were conducted throughout the day highlighting efforts for conservation of the bird species by the local communities under the leadership of one of Aaranyak's acclaimed conservation leader Dr Purnima Devi Barman. One of these events was focused on educating youth about conservation and protection of nesting colonies of this wonderful bird species. The event was conducted in presence of the delegates from the High Commission of Australia.



In Sivasagar, at Demowmukh Tribal LP school, we conducted a nature game 'Web of Life' with children and youth through poster Presentation on species co-existence and their role in Wildlife Conservation. We reached out to 40 students and 10 youth in the programme.

While at Haldhibari in Majuli, we reached out to around 30 people by organising 'Web of Life', wildlife-themed drawing contest and an interaction on role of students in nature conservation. In Dibrugarh, we collaborated with the Forest Department at Dehing Patkai National Park and organised bird watching session, followed by a cleanliness drive and an interaction on the role of youth in biodiversity conservation with around 39 youths from the Jeypore.

This series of programme was organised in Assam's Majuli, Sivasagar and Dibrugarh districts by Aaranyak-British Asian Trust, with support from Darwin Initiative on the occasion of the World Wildlife Day.



## Research outcome on Deepor Beel presented by Aaranyak's scientist



A team from Aaranyak participated in the 'State Level Stake Holders Consultation for Developing the IWMP on Deepor Beel' held on March 4 at the conference hall of Hotel Ghar Residency 365, Six Miles, Guwahati. Senior scientist Dr Partha Jyoti Das delivered a presentation on 'The Deepor Beel and its Riparian Fringe Area: A Socioeconomic and Livelihood Assessment in selected rural and urban human settlements'. The event was organised by the GIZ India and the Assam Forest Department.

## Workshop on nature and wildlife filmmaking



In a first of its kind initiative, Aaranyak organised a 3-day workshop on Nature & Wildlife Filmmaking during 8-10 March in Guwahati. It was organised in association with Nikon India as equipment partner and ecoNE as Media Partner. The workshop was coordinated with the facility and expertise available within the Media Production & Communications Division of Aaranyak that covered various topics such as basics of videography and cinematography, understanding nature and wildlife subjects, story development, hands-on video shooting and video editing etc.

# International Women's Day celebrated with indigenous women



The International Women's Day is celebrated on March 8. It is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity. Various women members of our conservation sites in Assam joined us during the day for celebrations.

The was celebrated with great enthusiasm at the Chandrasing Rongpi village community hall in Karbi Anglong district of Assam. The event which was organised by Aaranyak in collaboration with Chandrasing Rongpi Memorial School, Women Collective of Kohora River Basin and Diffolu River Basin, aimed to honour and empower indigenous Karbi women, address pertinent issues and foster collective action for positive change. Sixty-four Karbi tribe women from 10 villages in the Kaziranga Karbi Anglong Landscape (KKL) participated in the event, demonstrating their commitment towards women's empowerment and community engagement. The day began with outdoor games and an ethnic food competition, celebrating the cultural diversity of the participants.

In another occasion, we celebrated the day with women-folk we are cohesively working with to promote human elephant co-existence. We organised a community storytelling event to document the cultural and ecological history of the Dhansiri-Sikaridanga region in Udalguri district. Women from three peripheral villages in the landscape, gathered at the Ferenga Camp in Bhairabkunda, Udalguri, and actively participated in the event. They narrated their stories, which provided the Aaranyak team with insights on the history of the region.

The region was once inhabited by the Khair trees, which were uprooted during the flood in 1986, leaving the area mostly barren. Gradually the area was occupied by native grass species, forming a grassland-woodland mosaic. They mentioned that they derive benefits from NTFPs from the forested areas, encounter wildlife, including elephants, wild boars, and Asiatic black bears, frequently, causing distress. Nonetheless, they appreciate the presence of animals, and believe that both wildlife and people can coexist. Earlier, they faced economics losses in the form of livestock predation by large carnivores, which have reduced now. This potentially highlights local extirpation of the carnivores.





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While macaques and wild boars pose a threat to homesteads, dissuading the community from cultivating crops, they further added. It is a water scarce region, and farming is rain dependent, thus limiting them to cultivate only paddy. The people rely on river water for daily chores and drinking, which make them vulnerable to various water borne diseases. This event helped us establishing the history of the region, identify challenges faced by the community which will aid in implementing informed conservation action for well-being of the community and forests. This interaction was followed by a display of well-illustrated IEC materials highlighting the tried and tested measures to reduce HEC.

A section of women apparently do not pay much attention to their nutritional requirements and often suffer from nutrient deficiency, which impacts on their own as well as children's health. To generate awareness on the same, we reached out to the women of No. 2 Bhalatar village of Udalguri District of Assam, along with Kamala Devi, ASHA worker and her team for an interaction on "Poshtik Ahar" for the women. Nutrient rich food items were displayed, and the women were made aware of the balance that needs to be maintained by 'her' health and as well the family's. Bineswar Boro, President, Hajw erfang ABSU (All Bodo Students' Union) unit along with an ex-president of the same unit joined us during the event. Mr Boro in his enlightening speech talked about how the women from the society need to focus on chasing their dreams for putting their heads high in the society.

To make the event a fun-filled one, we conducted a food contest and organised games for the women. We believe in that health of people and the health of nature is intricately related.

Aaranyak's conservation biologist Dr Purnima Devi Barman was honoured by Directorate of Social Welfare (Women & Child Development Sector) of government of Assam for her contribution in conservation on International Women's Day. During the event, Dr Purnima spoke about her life journey and the obstacles she has faced as a conservationist and inspired other women to be strong and resilient. During her talk, she also discussed the importance of Hargila (Greater Adjutant Stork) in the ecosystem.



Aaranyak's conservation biologist Dr Alolika Sinha was invited as a Guest of Honour by the Bio-NEST, IIT Guwahati on the occasion of International Women's Day to share about her conservation journey and interact with women entrepreneurs of the region. Dr Sinha had a lovely interaction with all the women who are doing incredible work. The interaction was enriching for her, and she appreciates the efforts of Bio-NEST for providing a platform for the entrepreneurs and empowering the women.

# Training organised for Rapid Response Units



Aaranyak and British Asian Trust, with support from Darwin Initiative, initiated a long-term project on promotion of human-elephant co-existence in eastern Assam and West Garo Hills of Meghalaya. In this effort, we engaged with the local communities and formed Rapid Response Unit (RRUs) to manage HEC-alert and ensure safe passage of elephants. We helped formation of four RRUs in West Garo Hills in the villages of Photamati, Borogobal, Bondukmali and Jamdamgre.

On March 9, we conducted a training for the RRUs at the Borodubi LP School to build their capacity. Altogether 36 RRU members including women took part in the training. Aaranyak experts elaborated the roles and responsibilities of RRUs, about elephant behaviour, and different HEC mitigation measures, how to assess the crop and property damages and procedure of claiming compensation, a short presentation by the participants were conducted. Each RRU member received a T-shirt as well.

As many as 117 Rapid Response Units (RRU) members were recently trained by Aaranyak experts on ensuring human-elephant coexistence in a series of training programmes organised by Aranyak-British Asian Trust with support from Darwin Initiative in Tinsukia, Sivasagar and Jorhat districts of Assam. These RRU members who are closely networked through WhatsApp groups, resort to fast dissemination information among the group members as soon as they spot wild elephants close to human habitats. They constantly monitor movements of elephant herds. These RRUs have been formed in certain HEC-affected areas of five eastern Assam districts of Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Majuli, Sivasagar and Jorhat by Aaranyak and British Asian Trust with support from Darwin Initiatives.



Trainings were held at Basa Gaon of Sadiya in Tinsukia district, Charaguwa High School at Charaguwa Grant village around Panidihing Bird Sanctuary in Sivasagar district and at Hatisal Chapori village in Jhanjimukh locality of Jorhat district. Members of anti-depredation squads (ADS) of Assam Forest Department and other Forest staff too attended the training programmes besides RRU members. Pre and post evaluation exercises were conducted to assess the outcome of training programmes held during March 19 to 21.



## Aaranyak led conservation outreach in Charaichung Festival



The pristine river island Majuli of Assam witnessed a festival celebrating the importance of bird conservation and its ecological importance to nature and well-being of people. The festival called “Charaichung Festival” was organised by a Majuli-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) "Majulir Sahitya" and people from the local community from March 9-11.

The outstanding efforts to promote biodiversity conservation in Majuli have inspired Aaranyak to participate actively in the festival held at Swargadeo Pratap Singha Kshetra in order to protect and promote Charaichung, also a bird sanctuary. In the festival, Aaranyak’s senior scientist Dr Partha Jyoti Das spoke in a session on ‘Environmental movement in Assam’ on March 10. Aaranyak also organised a session called ‘Aaranyakar Adda’ on ‘Manuh, Prakriti aru Majulir Bhabishyat’ held on March 10 on the sidelines of the festival. More than 40 people from local villages as well as from some of the local organisations participated enthusiastically in this unique conversation held in the form of a free-flowing conversation (Adda).

The Adda resulted in several salient recommendations for ensuring the overall ecological security of the river island while dealing with the challenges of socio-economic and infrastructural development in the near future. Some practical suggestions also emerged from the participants specifically for restoring the historic bird habitat of Charaichung to convert it into an ecotourist attraction.

An exhibition stall demonstrating Aaranyak's conservation efforts in the region also featured at the exhibition space of the festival. Notably, Aaranyak is an associate organisation for the seminar on Nature Movements in Assam held on March 10.

## World Water Day celebrated

During World Water Day on March 22, The Institution of Engineers, Guwahati hosted Aaranyak’s Secretary General & CEO, Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, as the keynote speaker for World Water Day event. Dr Talukdar delivered a powerful message, emphasising the pressing need for water conservation. Through a poignant video, he highlighted the perilous consequences of water wastage, warning of potential future conflicts over this vital resource. With Reep Hazarika, Assam's State Information Commissioner, as the esteemed Chief Guest, the event garnered significant attention. Dr Talukdar's impassioned plea resonated deeply with the audience, comprising students and staff members of IEI, inspiring them to take proactive steps towards preserving our precious water sources for future generations.

# Tailoring school launched for fringe women of Manas



Aaranyak has introduced a tailoring school for indigenous women and young girls living in the fringe villages of Manas Tiger Reserve. Through this tailoring school, Aaranyak aims to provide the basic training on measurement, cutting and stitching to the trainees, so that they can equip themselves in tailoring skills that will allow them to find alternative livelihood opportunities leading to their reduced dependence on forest and contribute to conservation.

The tailoring school was officially launched on March 12 at Aaranyak's Manas Conservation and Outreach Centre, Bhuyapara, Baksa. The inauguration programme was attended by 23 trainees from Bhuyapara, Bamunkhal and Kumguri villages, situated around Manas Tiger Reserve, and the master trainer Pakhila Das. The programme commenced with lighting of lamp by Pakhila Das. Subsequently, the trainees were provided with a brief overview on the objectives of organising the tailoring school. Following that, participants were invited to discuss the aspects of tailoring they intended to learn at the training school. The programme concluded with segregation of the trainees into 4 groups that will attend classes thrice a week. This inclusive approach not only addresses gender disparities but also strengthens community involvement, leading to more effective and enduring forest conservation efforts.

The tailoring school has been initiated as part of the IUCN-KFW supported project titled "Securing population of tigers, habitats and biological corridors in Assam, India", being executed in Manas Landscape, Baksa District.



## Aaranyak's CEO speaks at Assam Down Town University



Senior Adviser for Asian Rhinos at International Rhino Foundation (IRF) as well as Secretary General and CEO of Aaranyak, Dr Bibhab Talukdar delivered a talk on the 'current trends in wildlife conservation and research from global and local perspectives' at Assam Down Town University on March 22.



## Technical workshop on Protected Areas

Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve Authority in collaboration with IUCN-CEM, Assam State Space Application Centre - ASSAC, North East Space Application Centre and Aaranyak as knowledge partner organised a 2-day technical workshop on “Role of Protected Areas for Biodiversity Conservation : A Geospatial Perspective” on 12-13 March at Kaziranga Convention Centre and Burapahar Range of the national park.

The workshop was inaugurated by Dr P. S. Roy (Senior Fellow, Sustainable Landscapes & Restoration, WRI) in presence of Dr S.P. Agarwal (Director, NESAC), Dr Shalini Dhyani (Sr Scientist CSIR-NEERI & IUCN CEM), Dr Sonali Ghosh (Director, KNP & TR), Dr Bibhuti Lahkar (Senior scientist and Program Secretary, Aaranyak) and other dignitaries as well as around 80 participants. The first day of this workshop included two technical sessions, a panel presentation and poster presentation sessions.

Aaranyak's Dr Lahkar, a panelist for the technical session “Habitat Management to Address Key Challenges of Invasive Species, flood and erosion control”. Senior officials with Aaranyak Arup Kumar Das, Madhumita Borthakur, Avishek Sarkar, Arif Hussain and volunteer Leenthoi Laishram presented posters and had healthy interactions with Dr Roy and the other dignitaries. During the second day of the workshop, the participants visited the METFLUX India project site at Burhapahar Range to understand the grassland-wood land carbon flux dynamics of the region.

## Students explore nature in Karbi Anglong

Aaranyak collaborated with Diring LP School of Karbi Anglong to conduct the second Nature Camp at Sarbura Singnar village, located in the Karbi Anglong district of Assam. The objective of the camp was to develop environmental consciousness and instill a sense of appreciation for nature among the youth, emphasising need for conservation efforts and sustainable practices. The event saw enthusiastic participation from 28 children hailing from Sarbura Singnar and Khailun Terang villages.



The speakers emphasised the transformative impact of such camps on young minds, encouraging active engagement in conservation efforts and ecological preservation. The day unfolded with a series of engaging activities designed to immerse the students in nature's wonders. An ice-breaking session helped build camaraderie among the participants, setting a positive tone for the day.

The highlight of the camp was the nature trails, where students were divided into five groups for an immersive experience in exploring nature. Guided by experts, the students learned about native plants, wildlife habitats, and conservation practices firsthand, deepening their understanding of environmental stewardship. Post-lunch, the energy remained high as students engaged in group activities and poster presentations based on their nature trail experiences. Each group showcased their findings, insights, and reflections, demonstrating a newfound appreciation for the natural world. The programme achieved success with the assistance of the Women collective group from Sarbura Singnar and the team from the Kaziranga.



## Nature's Wonderland : a journey of curiosity, continues



As part of a special nature introduction campaign, Aaranyak in collaboration with Guwahati Wildlife Division organised the chapter six of “Nature’s Wonderlad: A journey of curiosity” campaign in Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary on March 13. Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary, being in proximity to Guwahati, is maintaining the ecological balance and acting as a natural buffer, providing a green cover around the city. The sanctuary helps in mitigating the urban heat island effect, improves air quality and offers a visual respite from urbanisation.

The presence of the sanctuary plays an instrumental role in protecting the water resources. Sixteen nature enthusiasts joined the nature trail in the journey to understand the ecology and species diversity of the forest in this nature trail event. Throughout the journey, Aaranyak's experts helped the attendees identify various species of plants, birds, insects, and small mammals we encountered along the way as well as educated us on their importance for environment and our wellbeing. Furthermore, this special nature education programme also included a number of other activities including "Find a tree", learning sessions on bird watching, and several other games that teach more about nature.

Another chapter of the event was organised on March 30, which took place in the Garbhanga Reserve Forest. A total of 28 participants attended the nature walk and nature learning programme, which included students as well as individuals who care about the environment. The programme featured ecotherapy sessions, talks on birds and a birdwatching session. This campaign is supported by Wipro Earthian and LEA Associates South Asia Pvt Ltd (LASA).



# Training on farming in Udalguri

A training on Natural Farming was organised in Dimakuchi in collaboration with Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Udalguri to sensitise the community about natural farming and nutritional homestead gardening. A total of 29 participants attended the programme. Dr Nishita Pathak (Subject Expert, KVK Udalguri) and Utpal Deka (Reporter) and an Awardee of Pratibha Baruah Smarak Bota were the speaker of the programme. Dr Pathak talked about natural farming and zero budget farming. She introduced the participants to the four wheels of zero budget farming. She presented the process of making Bijamrita & Jiwamrita and showcased their benefits. She also talked about the three astras for plant protection namely Agniastra, Brahmastra and Neemastra.



She emphasized on intercropping and converting the homestead garden into a nutritional source for the household. While Mr Deka talked about the coexistence, road connections, human wildlife conflict and homestead gardens.

Jayanta Pathak, senior official with Aaranyak facilitated the programme and advocated for homestead garden farming, natural farming and how in the long run natural farming will contribute towards recovery of our ecology. The resource persons also visited the community nursery after the session. The training was organised for Aaranyak's ongoing project "Community based integrated approach to facilitate Human Elephant Coexistence and Biodiversity Conservation" in Udalguri District, Assam under the aegis of United Nations Development Programme - UNDP-GEF Small Grant Programme and Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Government of India, implemented by TERI - The Energy and Resources Institute.

## Our biologist talks at Cambridge SCCS



Aaranyak's senior biologist Dr Alolika Sinha has been selected for presenting a talk at the Student Conference on Conservation Science (SCCS), Cambridge, UK which was held from 26-28 March. She presented about how we managed invasive alien plants to recover native grassland ecosystems in Manas World Heritage site.

# Events marking International Day of Forests



On March 21 each year, the International Day of Forests celebrates the importance of forests and their conservation for life on earth.

During the Day, the Western Range (Raimona) of Raimona National Park and Aaranyak jointly organised an outreach event at Amritpur CNI Church, located at Amritpur F.V with the goal of raising awareness about the importance of forests and strengthening park-people relationships. In the opening remarks, Dr Dipankar Lahkar, Aaranyak's Senior Conservation Biologist, gave a brief overview of the event. The Range officers of the Central and Western Ranges of Raimona National park, as well as the President of the Church Ronen Narzary and Gaon Burhas (village heads) from Oxiguri, Dumbadmzar and Amritpur villages graced the event. Around 100 community people attended the event, including students, village community leaders, neighborhood residents, SHG women members & Forest personnel. An interaction session was held with the village people and forest officials raising their concern and queries about the forests and its significance.

Aaranyak with support from SBI Foundation organised a series of insightful activities at the Range Office of Bornadi Wildlife Sanctuary in Rajagarh, Udalguri district of Assam during the day. During the event, Forest Range Officer Rajen Daimari delivered a talk highlighting the significance of forests, while Aaranyak's Rabiya Daimari presented a talk on importance of forests and how well being of forests and people are intricately related. This was followed by an interaction with the local communities on human-elephant conflict (HEC) mitigation measures, using the illustrious IEC materials. Altogether 22 people, including Forest officials, VDP members from Rajagarh under Dimakuchi Circle, and other villagers participated in the programme

While senior conservationist with Aaranyak, Dr Dipankar Lahkar was invited to deliver talk as a resource person in Kachugaon IB as part of the celebration of the International Day of Forests organised by the Kokrajhar Government College and the Kachugaon Forest Division. The interactive event was attended by community stakeholders, forest staff, and VCDC members.





## Media consultation workshop on coexistence held in Tinsukia



A consultation hosted by Aaranyak in collaboration with Tinsukia Press Club on 'biodiversity conservation and human-wildlife coexistence' in the premises of the Press Club unanimously agreed that resolution of raging problem of human-elephant conflict (HEC) in the eastern Assam areas lied in restoration habitat and migration corridors. Aaranyak in collaboration with British Asian Trust and with support from Darwin Initiative, co-hosted the interaction with Media with Tinsukia Press Club on March 23.

Aaranyak's wildlife biologist Rubul Tanti made a detailed presentation on Aaranyak's hitherto initiatives for HEC mitigation through facilitation of human elephant coexistence with community support. Aaranyak's publicity secretary Bijay Sankar Bora in his presentation highlighted how media can be the catalyst in Aaranyak's efforts for achieving coexistence in HEC hotspots in the area. He flagged the media's importance for harping on biodiversity conservation and habitat restoration issues at this crucial juncture for the animal kingdom. Aaranyak's senior official Zakir Islam Bora through his presentation gave an overview of the organisation structure, operations and missions of 34-year-old Aaranyak.

## An urban waste management workshop organised

Aaranyak organised an interactive session to sensitise about waste management in urban landscape with special reference to Guwahati on March 23. Shirshendu Sekhar Das, Founder of Midway Journey-a Guwahati based NGO working on waste management was the speaker of the session. Mr Das gave an insight about waste classification, waste dumping, landfill, waste segregation & processing techniques.

He also shared the present scenario of waste dumping in our country. A number of environmental enthusiasts, wildlife biologists, conservationists, and social workers attended the event. The session proved to be fruitful as it triggered the mindset of all, everyone interacted with the speaker and knew many little things which is generally overlooked which made the programme a successful one. The programme was also attended by Suhan Mallick, popularly known as "Friend of Rhino". From Aaranyak 20 pieces of wooden Rhino mementos were gifted to him for encouragement.





## 3rd Orang Nature Camp in Orang Tiger Reserve

To 'connect kids to nature conservation efforts', Aaranyak has conducted yet another annual Nature Camp, third in a row, in the famed Orang National Park & Tiger Reserve (ONP & TR) in Assam during March 26-28. The 3rd Orang Nature Camp was organised in collaboration with the authority of Orang Tiger Reserve and Wild Wings with support from the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation (DSWF). It was participated by 32 high school students and 6 teachers from six schools namely Sialmari High School, Sankardev Jatiya Vidyalaya, Bechimari ME School, Keramot Ali, ME School, Dokhin Borsola High School, and Ballav Bhai Patel Higher Secondary School. All these schools are located in the proximity of Orang Tiger Reserve.

## An assessment of signs and habitats of wildlife



In the riverine landscape of Orang National Park & Tiger Reserve, Aaranyak recently conducted a rapid survey on wild animal signs and habitat. The primary goal of the survey is to comprehend the wildlife's recent footprints as they connect Orang National Park to Laokhowa-Burachapori Wildlife Sanctuary thoroughly with recently added areas. The Rufford Foundation supported this study last year and scope to update the recent findings. The rapid survey was conducted with active support from park authority.





## HEC-affected women in West Garo Hills receive handloom training



Aaranyak in partnership with British Asian Trust, and Biodiversity Challenge Funds (Darwin Initiative) is working cohesively with the local and indigenous communities in Assam and Meghalaya to promote human-elephant coexistence. In this effort, we conducted a 2-day training programme on handloom for 27 stakeholders at Bordubi LP School in West Garo Hills.

The training was conducted with an aim to build capacity and create livelihood opportunities for the HEC affected villagers. Nadeswar Deka, an expert in handloom, imparted the training to the women on how to effectively market their products and augment their income by applying design principles. The training aimed to equip women with the necessary skills to showcase their products in a competitive market and make them stand out.

The focus was on creating unique designs that can add more value to their products and increase their profitability. Mr Deka's expertise in handloom was a valuable asset to the training, and his guidance enabled the women to leverage their talents which will aid in supplementing their livelihood.

## Awards & Recognitions

Eminent primatologist and senior scientist with Aaranyak, Dr Dilip Chetry was conferred the “Parivesh Mitra Sanman- 2023” award as part of the celebration of the National Science Day, 2024 under aegis of Assam Government in the Assam Administrative Staff College.

Dr Dilip Chetry is a senior primatologist who has been extensively working in the field for last 3 decades. His works specially focus on the Hoolock Gibbon Conservation. Apart from research and awareness education, he has led initiatives to build the capacity of forest staff of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Tripura.

The award ceremony was graced by the Governor of Assam Gulab Chand Kataria and Minister, Science, Technology and Climate Change Department of Assam Government Keshab Mahanta besides a host of other senior and distinguished officials.

The event with the focal theme – Indigenous Technologies for Viksit Bharat was organised by the Science, Technology and Climate Change Department of Assam Government through Assam Science Technology and Environment Council (ASTEC) to honour prominent personalities having tremendous footprints in the field of science and technology.







# Aaranyak

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Editor: Bijay Sankar Bora

Executive Editor : Gunajit Mazumdar    Design: PR Cell, Aaranyak

Cover: Avijan Saha    Back cover: Imon Abedin

**Published by Aaranyak**